

IN THE DRAWINGS:

Please amend Figure 1A as shown in the attached red-ink marked-up copy of the drawing as original filed.

REMARKS

Claims 1-13 have been canceled and replaced by new claims 14-33. New independent claim 14 incorporates the limitations of original claims 1, 2 and 5. New independent claim 15 incorporates the limitations of original claims 1, 2 and 4. Dependent claims 16-33 recite the limitations of original claims 3 and 6-13 as depending from claims 14 and 15.

The drawings are objected to because reference numeral 29 in Figure 1A has no lead line. As noted in the specification on page 8, lines 9-10 the push spring 27 and the annular plate 28 comprise a support means 29. Accordingly, Figure 1A has been amended to show reference numeral 29 in parentheses next to both reference numeral 27 and reference number 28. It is respectfully submitted that this representation avoids unnecessary confusion which might be introduced if reference numeral 29 were used twice with separate lead lines to the push spring 27 and the annular plate 28, respectively. Therefore, approval of the proposed drawing changes and withdrawal of the objection to the drawings are respectfully requested.

As noted above, new claim 14 includes the limitations of original claims 1, 2 and 5. As such, claim 14 constitutes original claim 5 written in independent

form as required by the Examiner to be allowable. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection and allowance of claim 14 are respectfully requested.

It is respectfully submitted that new claims 16-24 are at least patentable in view of the patentability of claim 14 from which they depend.

Claims 1-4, 6-8 and 10-13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by Stellatella. The Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection.

New claim 15, corresponding to original claim 4 (written in independent form), specifically recites that the pull rod is connected to the driving means so as to be radially movable. Further, claim 15 recites an annular gap, defined between the housing and an outer peripheral surface of the annular member, which allows the pull rod and the annular member to move radially with respect to the housing. It is respectfully submitted that none of the prior art of record, disclose, teach or suggest this claimed structure.

The Examiner notes that Stellatella discloses a gap between elements 46 and 26. While a gap in general is clearly shown in Figure 2 for receiving the tube 52 being pulled, it will be noted that the gap between elements 46 and 26 according to Stellatella does not allow the pull rod 56 and the annular member/collet 46 to move radially with respect to the housing as recited in claim 15. This is because the structure disclosed by Stellatella includes an actuating member 36 which is slidably mounted by the element 26 and which includes a bore 58 into which the pull rod 56 is fitted. As such, the pull rod 56 is constrained against radial movement relative to the element 26 by the actuating member 36. Also, as clearly shown in Figures 2 and 3 of Stellatella, the annular member/collet 46 is mounted around the pull rod 56 and fitted within the end of

the actuating member 36. Thus, the annular member/collet 46 is also constrained against radial movement relative to the element 26 by the actuating member 36 contrary to the language of claim 15. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that the gap according to Stellatella cannot reasonably be considered to be the annular gap recited in claim 15.

Further, it is respectfully submitted that the pull rod 56 according to Stellatella cannot reasonably be considered to be connected to the drive means so as to be radially movable as recited in claim 15. As shown in Figure 2 of Stellatella, the pull rod 56 is fixed to the piston rod 22 of the fluid cylinder device 14, corresponding to the drive means. It is respectfully submitted that this fixation cannot reasonably be considered to connect the pull rod 56 to the drive means as claimed since the pull rod 56 is not radially movable, the connection between pull rod 56 and the piston rod 22 disclosing no structure that will allow radial movement of the pull rod 56.

The recited radially movable pull rod and annular gap which allows radial movement of the pull rod and the annular member with respect to the housing provides a distinct advantage over the prior art. Specifically, when the axis of the pull rod is misaligned with an axis of an engaging hole of an object to be fixed, the pull rod and the annular member will move radially to automatically correct the misalignment. Thus, the engaging hole may be smoothly fitted onto the annular member without requiring precise alignment of the clamping apparatus and the object to be fixed. This advantage is set forth on page 9, lines 10-19 of the specification.

Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that claim 15 recites structure that is fully patentably distinguishable over any of the prior art of record, in particular, Stellatella. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

It is respectfully submitted that new claims 25-33 are at least patentable in view of the patentability of claim 15 from which they depend.

Moreover, with respect to claims 26 and 31, reciting the limitations of original claim 7, it is respectfully submitted that none of the prior art of record disclose a housing which is detachably provided with an adapter block for receiving the object to be fixed. In particular, it is respectfully submitted that Stellatella fails to disclose any structure that can reasonably be considered to be a detachable adapter block for receiving an object to be fixed. It should be noted that the Examiner has failed to indicate any structure disclosed by Stellatella that is being relied upon to meet the limitations of original claim 7.

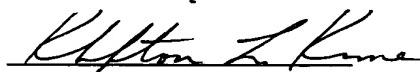
Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that claims 26 and 31 each recite structure that is fully patentably distinguishable over any of the prior art of record, in particular, Stellatella. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

In view of the amendments to the claims and the foregoing remarks, it is respectfully submitted that all of the claims under consideration are allowable and the application is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that claims 14-33 be allowed and the application be passed to issue.

Application No: 09/209,004
Group Art Unit: 3723
Examiner: R. Watson

If any issues remain that may be resolved by a telephone or facsimile communication with the Applicant's Attorney, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the numbers shown below.

Respectfully submitted,


Kilton L. Kime
Kilton L. Kime
Registration No. 42,733

BACON & THOMAS, PLLC
625 Slaters Lane - 4th Floor
Alexandria, VA 22314-1176
Telephone: (703) 683-0500
Facsimile: (703) 683-1080

Date: March 15, 2000
S:\Producer\k\k\YONEZAWA 209004\Amendment.frm